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A MEETING OF THE SOCIETY OF THE FRIENDS OF LIBERTY,

At SHACKLEWELL, ON MONDAY, JULY 20, 1795.

RESOLVED,

1st. **T**HAT the Constitution of this Country consists in a Government by King, Lords, and Commons.

2nd. That the Spirit of the Constitution requires, that they should be independant of each other.

3rd. That if by any means, any one or two of those branches of the Constitution should be controuled or influenced in its Deliberations by the other, the Spirit of the Constitution is violated though its form may remain.

4th. That from the increased, and increasing Influence of the Crown, by Persons who receive Pensions, and hold Offices, having Seats in Parliament, in defiance of the Law, which expressly says, "No Person who has an Office, or Place of Profit under the King, or receives a Pension from the Crown, shall be capable of serving as a Member of the House of Commons." 12 Will. III. ch. 2. And the interference of certain Peers, and great Landholders in the Nomination to Seats in Parliament; notwithstanding the following Resolution, which is entered on the Journals of the House of Commons at the commencement of every Session. "That it is a high Infringement upon the Liberties and Privileges of the Commons of Great Britain, for any Lord of Parliament, or any Lord Lieutenant of any County, to concern themselves in the Elections of Members to serve for the Commons in Parliament." By which the House of Commons have lost their Constitutional Independance, and have become Subject to the controul of the Crown and the Aristocracy instead of The People: Whereby the Government of this Country, has become in fact, a Government by King and Lords, instead of a Government by King, Lords, and Commons. *Therefore the Spirit of the Constitution is violated though its form remains.*

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5th. That from such a perversion of the Principles of the Constitution, the Law, instead of being the means of redress, has proved the Cause of Ruin to most of those who have had recourse to it. In the Church, Preferments and Benefices of all Kinds have been the reward of public Prostitution, private Interest, or sold for Money, without any regard to the Character or Qualification of the Incumbent. That to the disgrace of the Country the Corporation and Test Laws are continued, by which a Distinction is made between its Inhabitants; and in many instances the Life, Liberty, and Property of one Class of Men, are left to the discretion of another. That by the Corporation and Parish Laws, a poor Man is considered as a Foreigner in his native Country, and liable to be removed, or treated as a Vagabond at the arbitrary Will of a Justice of the Peace; to the prejudice of Himself, of his Family, and of the Community at large. That keeping up a large Standing Army, (by which the interests of the Soldier and the Citizen are separated); is calculated to introduce a system of Despotism inconsistent with a free Constitution, attended with an enormous Expence, and inimical to Morality. That the poor Man is liable to be torn from his Family and Employment to serve in foreign Wars without his consent. That Wars may be undertaken without the consent, and against the Will and Interests of the Nation; to gratify the avarice or ambition of a Minister and his Dependents. That the whole Power of the Nation is usurped by the Landed Interest, to the prejudice of the Commercial and Manufacturing; in consequence of which, the price of Provisions has advanced, and must continue to increase; and without an augmentation in the price of Labour, the Manufacturer must starve, or if that augmentation should take place, we should then be undersold in the foreign Markets, and perhaps by Foreigners in our own Markets. That new Debts and new Taxes are perpetually succeeding each other till a national Bankruptcy must follow; and in the mean time, the Money wrung from the hard earnings of the laborious Poor, is squandered away in useless Places and unmerited Pensions, for the support of Parliamentary Influence. That from such a system of Corruption and Oppression, Taxes and Provision have advanced, and the honest Poor have been driven to acts of Outrage, at which their Minds would revolt under happier Circumstances.

6th. That it is the Opinion of this Society, that the House of Commons in its present State, cannot afford permanent Relief in the foregoing Cases. That Relief is only to be expected from a Parliament in which the various Interests of the Community may be equally consulted. That restoring to the People their long lost Right of "Universal Suffrage," in the electing of Members to serve in Parliament; by representing all the Men in the Nation, must represent all their Wants, and therefore afford the best and only effectual means of *redressing* all their *Wrongs*, and of *procuring* all their *Rights*. But as Power, when it remains too long in the Possession of any set of Men, is like to be abused; it is only by recurring to that other wise Provision of our Ancestors that it can be prevented, viz. "Annual Elections."

7th. That we will use every Means which the Law has provided for the *Restoration of our Rights*; and we call upon our Countrymen to do the same; that our Children, and our Children's Children to remotest Ages, may look back with respect and gratitude, and say, "Behold the Work of our Fathers."

8th. That having founded our Claims on the Constitution of our Country, neither Persecution, nor Prosecution shall make us relinquish them; the Attainment of which will be so conducive to the general Good.

9th. That the London Corresponding Society have deserved well of their Country.

10th. That the Thanks of this Society be given to the Chairman for his prudent and manly Conduct.

Signed by Order of the Society of THE FRIENDS OF LIBERTY,

WILLIAM TOONE, CHAIRMAN
JOSEPH BURKS, SECRETARY.

N. B. As these Resolutions are distributed Gratis, those who wish to promote the welfare of the Community, will, perhaps, after perusing them, take a pleasure in Recommending them to the Attention of others.

After

After Dinner the following Toasts were given:

- 1 **OUR COUNTRY.**
- 2 May the blossoms of Liberty survive the cutting blasts of Despotism, and ripen into fruit of which the whole Earth may partake.
- 3 May England be speedily divided into small farms, by which the industrious poor may live, and monopolizing be done away.
- 4 May the Tree of Liberty overshadow the Earth, and the industrious poor find shelter under its Branches.
- 5 May Peace and Plenty succeed War and Poverty.
- 6 May the Arms of England never be directed but against its real Enemies.
- 7 May those who view with indifference the Claims of the People, be rewarded with the blessings of those Dungeons which confine the Patriots of England.
- 8 May all true friends to happiness of the human Race, speedily have the pleasure of seeing their benevolent wishes crowned with Success.
- 9 May those meet with their deserts who projected the infernal scheme of starving twenty five millions of People, and whose miserable politics have nearly reduc'd their own country to Famine.
- 10 May all those who seek for Freedom find it in their native land.
- 11 The exil'd Patriots; and may we never forget their Virtues and their sufferings.
- 12 The suffering Patriots at home.
- 13 May the children of the suffering Patriots find a Father in the People.
- 14 May the RIGHTS OF MAN be the basis of all Governments, and become the guide of Nations towards each other.
- 15 May those who suffer for their country never want a friend to cheer the gloom of their prison.
- 16 May the bosoms of the British fair glow with the ardour of Liberty, and may they bestow their affection on those men only who have the Virtue and Courage to defend it.